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# Compliance Assistance Initiative

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Department of Natural Resources fact sheet

8/2006

## **The B2 vision for the Department of Natural Resources**

During the past year, Director Childers has worked closely with his staff on a new design for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. The department can be compared to the history of the B52 and B2 airplanes. Fifty years separate the technologies of the two planes. The B52 cannot handle the responsibilities of the B2 in today's world, even with all the changes and upgrades to its original design.

The Department of Natural Resources wants to take its human and other resources and perform successfully in the world of modern technology. The agency's leadership team believes it can transform its B52 into a new B2 model by fully utilizing the knowledge and skills of senior members while transferring new technologies and skills into a new era of environmental protection.

## **Compliance Assistance Initiative makes vision a reality**

In November 2005, the Department of Natural Resources launched a new Compliance Assistance Initiative. This new initiative reflects the department's new way of doing business, with an increased emphasis on customer service and bringing departmental resources closer to the citizens we serve.

Below you will find additional information on the core pieces of the Compliance Assistance Initiative: the ombudsman program, initial assistance visits, expanded satellite offices, improvements to state environmental permitting and improved online information and services for department customers.

## **Ombudsman Program**

*Ombudsmen reach out to local communities to improve environmental compliance*

The Department of Natural Resources' ombudsmen have made about 1,500 contacts with citizens, community officials and businesses since September 2005. The department put the ombudsmen in place in an effort to improve environmental compliance and customer service to Missouri citizens.

The ombudsmen are learning about minor frustrations folks have with the department. Serving as the director's eyes and ears in the local communities gives the ombudsmen the ability to work with technical staff in addressing these frustrations before they turn into major problems. In the interest of improving customer service, the agency is going to the problems instead of waiting for them to come to the department.



To date, Department Director Doyle Childers and the ombudsmen have met with county commissions, communities and businesses across Missouri to learn more about local environmental issues and how the Department of Natural Resources can better serve citizens. Many of the ombudsmen success stories to date include finding answers to questions and resolving problems, often within a number of hours instead of days or weeks, for citizens, communities and businesses. Sometimes it's as simple as directing someone outside the agency to the right program or staff person within the agency to address their concern. The development of the program reflects a core belief that the ombudsmen can help the department improve the quality of life for Missouri citizens.

There are seven ombudsmen serving central, northwest, southeast and southwest Missouri as well as the Kansas City and St. Louis areas: Kansas City area - Judy Bowman (816-565-1296); St. Louis area - Mike Alesandrini (314-560-4703); Central Missouri - Jim Froelker (573-619-1410); Northeast Missouri - Don Summers (573-291-3055); Southeast Missouri – Jackson Bostic (573-619-1407); Southwest Missouri - Carrie Smith (573-619-1409); Southwest Missouri - Dave Woolery (573-619-1408).

For a map of the areas the ombudsmen serve, please visit our Web site at [www.dnr.mo.gov/directory.htm](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/directory.htm) - Ombudsman Map.

### **Initial Assistance Visits**

*Initial assistance visits help citizens, facilities understand requirements of their environmental permits*

Initial assistance visits became standard practice in January 2006 for the Department of Natural Resources. Staff from the department visited land disturbance sites, newly permitted air sources, drinking water facilities where permit actions are anticipated, limestone quarries and hazardous waste generators. The department walked permittees through their unique permit requirements and provided compliance assistance rather than conducting formal inspections.

In a survey of businesses conducted by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, nearly 99 percent of respondents reported that they felt well served by staff from the department who visited their operations as part of initial assistance visits.

About 82 percent of the new permit holders completed a survey. New permit holders were asked to rate the department's assistance on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being best) on how helpful the staff visits were in helping to understand the permit. The department received an overall rating of approximately 92 percent. Respondents said they found the visits to be very informative and proactive and that they helped to reinforce good practices already being implemented at the facilities.

In instances where no survey was returned, the department's ombudsmen followed up directly with facilities, which helped ensure more responses were received. The Department of Natural Resources will continue to survey facilities regarding their experiences with initial assistance visits and department service. As concerns with communication, professionalism or training are identified, the agency will address each of them to improve its effectiveness.

Initial assistance visits are a new component of the department's compliance assistance efforts, which are designed to help businesses, communities and citizens protect the environment by preventing spills, leaks and other hazards from occurring. Because the visits are not formal

inspections, compliance assistance is provided with the expectation that corrections will be made if the department discovers any problems. However, the department will initiate formal enforcement actions if violations of a very serious nature are found. Very serious violations are those that are immediately or imminently harmful to human health or the environment, such as a hazardous waste release.

Detailed information about the department's procedures for initial assistance visits is available in its Field Services Division Operations Manual, which is available online at [www.dnr.mo.gov/services/opsmanual.htm](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/services/opsmanual.htm).

### **Procedural manuals now online**

Those responsible for ensuring that their operations comply with state environmental requirements have new tools to aid them in their efforts: the how-to manuals used by regulators in writing permits and performing environmental inspections and investigations.

Everyone will be able to work from the same page because these manuals provide the same information to department permittees and to customers that agency staff use. Making these manuals available to the public will promote a better understanding of department procedures and take the mystery out of the process. This will save businesses time and money and saves agency staff resources as well.

The Water Pollution Control Permits Manual is a tool for department staff writing permits under the Missouri Clean Water Law. It is intended to help all department offices involved in water pollution control permitting follow the same basic processes and guidelines when drafting permits, helping to ensure consistency.

This manual is available online at [www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/permits/manual/index.html](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/permits/manual/index.html) to assist those who are seeking or are working to comply with department permits. This guide will serve as a good starting point for basic information and a tool to find other resources. Links and contact information for other agencies can be found throughout the guide. This manual will be continually updated.

The department's Field Services Division is in the process of making its Operations Manual available on the department's Web site at [www.dnr.mo.gov/services/opsmanual.htm](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/services/opsmanual.htm). This manual also will be updated regularly and provides information on the department's initial assistance visits, inspections, complaint investigations and other division procedures. Regulated businesses and facilities may find the department's procedures and checklists helpful for developing their own internal inspections and procedures.

### **Technical staff now better equipped for field inspections**

Tablet PCs have recently been provided to more than 200 field staff who conduct complaint investigations, compliance assistance visits, field inspections and engineering evaluations. Complimenting the tablets will be newly converted checklists that will allow completed forms or narrative reports to be left with the facility representative at the end of each site visit. The timeliness of feedback, plus the additional contacts made possible due to increased efficiency, should translate into better environmental compliance.

### **Satellite offices expand service to Missourians**

The department recently expanded its services to citizens in Missouri through new satellite offices in Benton, Howell, Jasper, New Madrid, Nodaway and Phelps counties. Satellite offices

complement and extend services provided by the regional offices. They are part of the department's Field Services Division, which oversees five regional offices, 16 satellite and project offices, the department's Environmental Services and other key field activities.

The department's goal is to serve communities and facilities more directly by placing more staff in the field. Providing local staff assistance helps the agency get environmental help closer to where it is needed.

### **Permit Efficiencies**

*Time to issue some permits has been cut in half; department's permit process is easier and more accessible to Missouri citizens and businesses through the use of eServices, [www.dnr.mo.gov/eservices.htm](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/eservices.htm).*

The Department of Natural Resources is committed to a new strategy of simplifying the permit process while improving the environment through follow-up visits with permit holders. Traditionally, considerable effort has been invested in writing very protective permits; however, many permit recipients have never been visited to ensure that they understand the permit and are following the permit conditions.

The department has cut the time to issue some of its permits in half over the past year. Also, the agency is working to make the permit process easier and more accessible to Missouri citizens and businesses through the use of eServices, [www.dnr.mo.gov/eservices.htm](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/eservices.htm).

Citizens are now able to fill out electronic forms for dry cleaner registrations, petroleum storage tanks registrations, open burning of vegetative waste and hazardous waste generator ID numbers online. This first step in electronic submission will also help speed up the permitting process for citizens and businesses.

Forms for more complex permits are online, and the department is currently receiving feedback on how to improve this process for citizens and businesses. The agency is also working to complete its permit manuals, which are now available to the public online.

### **Department's new home page is simpler, easier to use**

This summer, the department unveiled a new home page on the Internet. The agency wanted to simplify the look of the site as well as make it easier to find information on its Web site. A Google search engine allows the user to search the department's and the State of Missouri's Web sites for information by key words or phrases.

Almost 5 million people have visited the department's new home page at [www.dnr.mo.gov](http://www.dnr.mo.gov).

### **Electronic forms now online**

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources recently began making permit, license and certification forms available in Microsoft Word, Microsoft Works, Open Office and other word processing software. This change enables businesses to complete these forms electronically and save them so they can easily be updated for future submissions.

This is another component in the department's larger, ongoing effort to simplify the way it does business. Governor Blunt challenged the agency to make its processes less cumbersome. By easing the paperwork process, the department hopes to help its permittees focus on running successful businesses in a way that's sensitive to Missouri's natural resources.

The department's Air Pollution Control Program and its Division of Geology and Land Survey are the first offices to make forms available in these formats. Forms are protected so their integrity isn't compromised, while still allowing customers to type in the fields and save the file for finishing on a later date. When customers are done filling out the form, they can print and mail the form to the Department of Natural Resources, or they can sign the form and e-mail it to the department.

Customers can reuse these forms year after year. Check the department's Web site regularly at [www.dnr.mo.gov/forms/](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/forms/) to see if forms have been updated.

**For More Information....**

For news releases on the Web, visit [www.dnr.mo.gov/newsrel](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/newsrel). For a complete listing of the department's upcoming meetings, hearings and events, visit the department's online calendar at [www.dnr.mo.gov/calendar/search.do](http://www.dnr.mo.gov/calendar/search.do).

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176  
(573) 751-3443 or 1-800-361-4827  
E-mail: [contact@dnr.mo.gov](mailto:contact@dnr.mo.gov)  
Web site: [www.dnr.mo.gov](http://www.dnr.mo.gov)



## Southeast Area

-  **Taney / Stone County Satellite Office**  
Table Rock State Park  
5272 State Hwy 165  
Branson, MO 65616  
(417) 337-9732

For more information on  
the department, visit  
[www.dnr.mo.gov](http://www.dnr.mo.gov)  
call 1-800-361-4827  
or write to  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176.